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Slavery Bill & Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines on the Legal Parameters of Slavery

Posted on 08/04/2014 by John Cairns

This blog has a distinct and definite interest in slavery, particularly historical. Regular readers will be aware of this.

Today, 8th April 2014, the new draft Slavery Bill of a joint committee of the Houses of Commons and Lords was published. Its first clause criminalises slavery. It is good to note that the definition of slavery given here follows that developed in the Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines on the Legal Parameters of Slavery (see <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofLaw/Research/HumanRightsCentre/Resources/Bellagio-HarvardGuidelinesontheLegalParametersofSlavery/>), in the development of which your blogger had the honour to play a part, in the course of the work of a Research Network on the Legal Parameters of Slavery. Under the capable leadership of Jean Allain, the Research Network's exploration started from the UN's definition of slavery, and the problems found in interpreting it, to create the Guidelines. It is good to see that they are starting to have real impact.

The proposed bill, if enacted, will apply only to England Wales. Co-operation is proposed through the UK. In Scotland, in September 2013, Ms Jenny Marra, MSP, introduced for consultation a proposal for a Human Trafficking (Scotland) Bill for consultation (no draft bill was provided); following a very favourable response, the proposal fell on 17 March 2014 when the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Mr K. McAskill indicated that the Scottish Government would, within the current session of Parliament, introduce a bill to cover human trafficking. We will wait to see what is produced. One hopes the drafters of the bill will also take into account the Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines.

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